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The facilitators and barriers to physical activity in lower limb amputees: a qualitative approach

¹*Jennifer Jones, ²Gillian Phillips, ²Ashley Jones

¹Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Leeds, United Kingdom

²School of Clinical and Applied Sciences, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom.

*Corresponding author: j.jones36@nhs.net; Twitter: @jenny_jones1988

It is widely accepted that participating in physical activity (PA) is beneficial for individuals with an amputation (Donachy et al. 2004 *Disability & Rehabilitation* 2004, 26(8), 495-499), with reported benefits to include improved cardiovascular function, balance, self-esteem and quality of life (Bragaru et al. 2011, *Sports Medicine*, 41(9), 721-740). Despite these benefits, studies have shown low levels of participation in PA by lower limb amputees (LLA), with limited research existing exploring the reasons for this (Couture et al. 2010, *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 32(1), 57-64). The aim of this study was to explore the perceived facilitators and barriers to participating in PA for individuals with LLA, with the thought of understating what influences the type and amount of activities LLA's enjoy today. Following university ethical approval, 8 participants who responded to an advertisement were interviewed using semi-structured telephone interviews. All interviews were transcribed and analysed by thematic analysis and fifteen themes emerged: body health and fitness, goal achievement, intrinsic motivation, change, wellbeing, enjoyment, mind and body, social support, social influences, vocation, facilities and cost, extrinsic motivators, prosthetic and participation costs, lack of physical activity encouragement and basic rehabilitation period. Cycling was 88% of participants preferred form of activity, and the perceived amount of PA compared to pre-amputation was largely the 'Same' or 'less'. In summary, the facilitators and barriers to PA for LLA are multifactorial, consisting of physical, psychological, social and environmental factors. Findings suggest a potential review of the LLA physiotherapy rehabilitation experience with an emphasis to be put upon increasing PA participation for all stages, taking an individualised approach to encourage involvement.